

Letters to the Editor

Why does AJP publish so little research in education?

I was recently undertaking a literature review of the physiotherapy literature for an expert paper I have been invited to write for another journal. The focus of this paper is in education and I was rather surprised when I went through the past five years of the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* to discover how little there is published in this journal regarding physiotherapy education. It is unfortunate that many of the research articles and expert papers that I have come across by Australian researchers over the past five years are being showcased in American, British and Canadian journals.

While I cannot say whether these authors have elected to publish overseas or have been thwarted by the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* in their attempts to have educational research published, it is disheartening to see such a gap in our national journal.

There is a lot of evidence-based work being done in education in Australia with respect to clinical reasoning, professional development, and clinical mastery, for example. If it is the policy of the Journal not to consider papers from education I would hope that this would be reconsidered. If not, it would be good if the Editorial Board could develop some strategies to see more evidence-based education work published in the Journal.

Richard Ladyszewsky
Curtin University of Technology

There is little choice

We thank Dr Ladyszewsky for his letter. Dr Ladyszewsky indicates that he is aware of many research papers on physiotherapy education in other journals. He laments that the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* publishes few such papers and suggests this could be either because authors choose to publish elsewhere or because the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* rejects their papers.

There are, in fact, remarkably few studies of educational research in physiotherapy published in any journal. We searched the CINAHL database on 23 September using the terms (physical therapy OR physiotherapy) AND (education\$ OR pedagog\$ OR clinical reasoning OR professional development OR mastery OR student\$ OR curricul\$ OR undergraduate OR postgraduate OR under-graduate OR post-graduate OR degree OR universit\$); we restricted search results to 2005 publications. This returned 342 records, of which 28 concerned physiotherapy education. Most originated from the United States. Four of the articles were news items or histories, 10 were essays or narrative reviews, 7 were surveys of students or teachers, and 6 were other kinds of research. These are lean pickings indeed! Of course a more exhaustive search may locate more research but the message is unlikely to change:

there is very little research into physiotherapy education, and most of the research consists of surveys of students or teachers.

It is not surprising, then, that the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* receives few submissions that report research into physiotherapy education. In 2004 we received three such papers. One was sent out for review and was subsequently published (Stiller et al 2004). The other two, both analyses of undergraduate curricula, were deemed not suitable for publication in the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy*. This small sample of submissions appears to fare no worse than other manuscripts submitted to the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy*: in total 70 manuscripts were submitted in 2004 and 23 were accepted for publication, corresponding to an acceptance rate of 33%.

These statistics suggest that the reason the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* publishes very little educational research is not that the journal discriminates against educational research, or that authors publish their work elsewhere. The cause is the remarkably low volume of publishable research conducted by researchers in physiotherapy education.

The Editorial Board of the *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* is committed to publishing research that is both credible and important, including credible and important research into physiotherapy education.

Rob Herbert

Co-Scientific Editor; On behalf of the Editorial Board

Reference

Stiller K, Lynch E, Phillips AC and Lambert P (2004): Clinical education of physiotherapy students in Australia: Perceptions of current models. *Australian Journal of Physiotherapy* 50: 243–247.

Was CAP summary faithful?

Whilst reading the recent Journal (AJP Volume 51 No 3), the heading of one of the critically appraised papers (CAPs) caught my eye, 'Treadmill training more effective than Bobath training in improving walking following stroke'. The title of the article being appraised was 'Aerobic treadmill **plus Bobath** walking training improves walking in subacute stroke; A randomized controlled trial' (emphasis added). On reading the original article, I was confused at how the synopsis could conclude 'Treadmill training induces greater improvements in walking speed and distance than Bobath walking training in patients with moderate physical disability due to recent first stroke' The corresponding statement in the original article read 'Aerobic treadmill **plus Bobath** walking training in moderately affected stroke patients was better than Bobath walking training **alone** with respect to the improvement of walking velocity and capacity...' (again emphasis added) (Eich et al 2004).

Although the inclusion of Bobath in both the experimental and control groups is mentioned in the interventions section